

# PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

# THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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## SUPERSTITIOUS FREETHINKERS.

It has been said of Robert Burns that, although his head and heart rejected Calvinism, he never quite got it out of his blood. There is much truth in this metaphor. Burns was, in religious matters, one of a very large class. Many men rid their intellects of a superstition, without being able to resist its power over their feelings. Even so profound a sceptic as Rénan has admitted that his life is guided by a faith he no longer possesses. And we are all familiar with common instances of the same thing. How many people are there who have absolutely no belief in ghosts, but who cannot be alone in the dark without feeling "the creeps." How many who understand the nature of thunderstorms, yet experience a peculiar terror when they see and hear "the dreadful artillery of heaven." How many who laugh at witchcraft, yet feel something uncanny when a wizened old woman is pointed out as guilty of that crime.

I have known several instances of superstition among Freethinkers. I remember very well how shocked some of them were at the thought of playing cards on Sunday in a well-known Club, and how much more they were shocked when dancing was introduced. They were perfectly sincere, and their pain at the sight of such profanity was very real. It was the old superstition of their childhood still clinging to them. Of course they knew that Sunday was no more sacred than any other day, but somehow they felt it wrong to act on that opinion.

The Sunday League furnishes another illustration. This admirable and courageous body, which did all the rough work before the more aristocratic Sunday Society was heard of, has for many years organised country excursions and town lectures on the blessed Sabbath. The excursions are secular enough, and so for the most part are the lectures; but the League shrinks from profane music, and however heterodox a discourse you listen to, it is pretty sure to be ushered in with an ample corrective dose of sacred harmony. I am perfectly aware that the Sunday League is not a Freethought Society; yet it does not believe in the sacredness of the Sabbath, and that makes its sacred music and its "religious service" a little farcical.

Reverting to avowed Freethinkers, it is evident that some of them who have lost belief in God are afraid to speak too loud lest he should overhear them. "How old are you, Monsieur Fontenelle?" asked a pretty young French lady. "Hush, not so loud, dear madame," replied the witty nonagenarian, pointing upward. What Fontenelle did as a piece of graceful wit, some Freethinkers do without any wit at all. They object to laughing at the gods, whether Christian, Brahmanic or Mohammedan; and perhaps they would extend the same friendly consideration to Mumbo Jumbo. Strange that people should be so tender about ghosts! Especially when they don't even believe them to be real ghosts. To the Atheist all gods are fancies, mere delusions (not *illusions*), like the philosopher's stone, witchcraft, astrology, holy water, and miracles. I am as much entitled to ridicule the gods of Christianity (there are at least three of them, and they couldn't well be made more ridiculous than they are) as any other Freethinker is entitled to ridicule the miracles at Lourdes; and when "taste" is dragged into the question, I simply reply that there is as much ill taste in the one case

as in the other. All that this "taste" can mean is that no devout delusion should be ridiculed, which is itself one of the greatest pieces of absurdity ever perpetrated. It would shield every form of "spiritual" lunacy in the world.

These squeamish Freethinkers don't object to ridicule in politics, literature, or social life. They rather approve *Punch* and the other comic journals, even when these satirise living persons who feel the sting. Why then do they object to ridicule in religion? Simply because they still *feel* that there is something sacred about it. Now I insist that on the Atheist's principles there can be no such sacredness, and I decline to recognise it. I take the full consequences and claim the full liberty of my belief.

Christians may, of course, urge that their *feelings* on such a subject as religion *are sacred*, and a few superstitious Freethinkers may concede this monstrous position. I do not. The feelings of a Christian about Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are no more sacred than my feelings on any other subject. I have no quarrel with persons, and I recognise how many are hurt by satire. But the world is not to be regulated by their feelings, and much as I respect them I have a greater respect for truth. Every mental weapon is valid against mental error. And as ridicule has been found the most potent weapon of religious enfranchisement, we are bound to use it against the wretched superstitions which cumber the path of progress. Intellectually, it is as absurd to give quarter as it is absurd to expect it.

My answer to the Freethinkers who would coquet with Christianity, and gain a fictitious respectability by courting compliments from Christian teachers, is that they are playing with fire. Let them ponder the lessons of history, and remember Clifford's bitter word about the evil superstition which destroyed one civilisation and nearly succeeded in destroying another. Fortunately, however, the logic of things is against them. Broad currents of thought go on their way without being deflected by backwashes or eddies or spurts into blind passages. Freethought will sweep on with its main volume, and dash against every impediment with all its effective force.

G. W. FOOTE.

## A DREAM.

I was occupied through that long winter evening in elaborating the sublimest poem that has ever yet been written. The dream of my youth was accomplished: I had left Shakespeare and Milton far beneath me, and had even outsoared the loftiest flights of Alfred Austin and Professor Shairp. It needed nothing but a publisher and a public to be a complete success. As I sat there dreaming anticipatory laudations I heard a timid rap at the door; and, somewhat impatient at the untimely interruption, I threw it open and asked what was wanted. A thin and shaky voice replied:—

"Pity the sorrows of a poor old God

Whose trembling limbs have borne him to your door."

"This won't do," I answered sternly; "you gods are a sorry lot; some of you are always on tramp. But come in," I added, as a fiercer blast than usual swept the snow in at the doorway. He entered with tottering steps and sank into a chair, where he sneezed a moment and then said, as if in answer to my previous remonstrance "I really can't help it; they have transferred the seat of reality from a Cogitable Universal to a Sensible Particular."



"Jahveh," I said seriously, "do you really know what you are talking about?"

He shook his head mournfully and continued: "Ah, the happy days of youth! Then I had a peculiar people like a bird with a string round its leg—but now, where are they? Then I had a son of the same age as myself, and much the best of the two—but now, where is he? They have made a man of him. Then I had a hell—but what the devil they have done with it is beyond divine ken. Then I had a book—but they caricatured it and I had to pay costs for anti-blasphemy. I had an ontological proof, and a cosmological proof, and a physico-theological proof, but they gave way beneath me, and now I am not myself at all. I am nothing but a figment!"

A tear stole down the cheek of the figment.

"Now," he added positively, "I am nothing but an Eternal not-yourself making for righteousness—I am a great Heaven-high Unquestionability—I am the Immense Unknowability—I am the Alpheteeterome gatherium. It's very hard on a poor God to be labelled with long names like a patent medicine; people are ashamed to invest in what they cannot pronounce and don't know the meaning of."

"Is there nothing I can do for you?" I said, for I could not but compassionate his forlorn condition.

He writhed a moment and then said, "I have but one hope; send for Romanes and the Bishop of Carlisle."

I dispatched a swift messenger to tell them of the collapsed state of the Omnipotseipresence.

They returned with my servant, felt the divine pulse which was waxing more and more feeble, and after consulting for a moment, dexterously seized the shrivelled deity, and without further preface laid him on the table. Having carefully sprinkled disinfectants, Romanes made an incision with a borrowed pair of scissors, and the Bishop of Carlisle, producing a pair of bellows manufactured by himself before he was born, clapped the nozzle to the orifice and set to work with all the force of an episcopal arm. The effect was miraculous, wrinkles vanished, and rotundity began to emerge from slackness and depression.

"Lovely!" murmured the recumbent God. "Blow me tight!"

"I will! I will!" cried the excellent bishop.

"Sit on his head," said Romanes to me, "he is becoming unmanageable."

I sat. A glow of youth began to suffuse the features; soaring symptoms rapidly developed; he began to mutter the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed, and swore hard and fast that there were three of them.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Bishop, "Jahveh's himself again."

The prostrate one chuckled; he was evidently trying to remember what, according to precedent, a deity should be expected to say.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth," he muttered, "thou hearest the sound thereof."

Almost as he spoke there was a tremendous report. The new wind had been too much for the old bladder, and when I recovered consciousness I found Romanes sorrowfully examining the Bishop's bellows while the latter was energetically collecting scattered scraps of deity for future use.

Q. Z.

## ON DREAMS.

ROMEO.—Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace;  
Thou talk'st of nothing.

MERCUTIO.—True, I talk of dreams  
Which are the children of an idle brain,  
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy;  
Which is as thin of substance as the air  
And more inconstant than the wind.—*Shakespeare.*

MERCUTIO'S opinion of dreams is not that of primitive man. In the early stages of human thought the distinction between the subjective and objective was by no means closely drawn. The proof of this is to be found in all the mythologies. Among savages, dreams are universally held to be supernatural; the dreamer either being visited by spirits, or his own spirit wandering away in spirit-land. Dreams, indeed, very probably gave rise to the theory of spirits. The body, in sleep, lying apparently lifeless, the savage, not unnaturally, concludes that the life, breath, or spirit has left it. In this he is confirmed by dreams, wherein he appears to visit other

localities and see persons after they are dead. Dreams, therefore, to the savage—who often, after a heavy carouse, fights his battles o'er again in sleep and sees his dead friends and foes—have a reality and importance we can hardly appreciate. So strongly did the North American Indians have faith in their own dreams, that on one occasion when an Indian dreamt that he was taken captive, he induced his friends to make a mock attack on him, to bind him and to treat him as a captive, actually submitting to a considerable amount of torture in the hope thus to fulfil his dream. Dreams, they think, are of supernatural origin, and it is a religious duty to attend to them. That white men should look on a dream as a matter of no consequence is a thing they cannot understand. A whole Australian tribe have been known to decamp because one of their number dreamt of a certain kind of owl, which dream the wise men declared to forbode an attack from a certain other tribe. It was mainly the phenomena of dreams which, in various tribes, gave rise to seers, prophets, and expounders of dreams. They are classed together in the Bible. Thus, in Deut. xiii., 1: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams." Jer. xxvii., 9: "Therefore hearken ye not to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers." Zech. x., 2: "The diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams."

To early man, dreams are not an irregular action and partial activity of the brain, but so many revelations of another world. Indeed, so late is this conception that Thomas Paine was one of the first to give a really lucid scientific explanation of dreams as occasioned by the partial awakening of certain groups of cells of the brain, while most of their fellows were asleep. Paine also, if we recollect rightly, pointed out how long-forgotten impressions rise again in the sensorium, and that in sleep the imagination has fuller play. The savage belief in dreams yet survives among the more ignorant and credulous in every part of the globe. Even in "enlightened" England, "dream books" still circulate widely among these classes. Especially among the lesser cultured women much time is still spent in relating and interpreting dreams, and many a village has yet its Joseph with a reputation for onieromancy.

Throughout the sacred books of the Jews there is abundant evidence of their belief in the supernatural nature of dreams. When their highly extolled ancestor, Abraham, passed off his wife, Sarah, to Abimelech, as his sister, God appeared to Abimelech in a dream to warn him that it was his wife (Gen. xx., 3). He also showed the ladder to Jacob in a dream, and came to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream. Joseph was a great don both at dreaming and at interpreting dreams. His whole history depends on them. Jahveh called Samuel in the night, and appeared to Solomon in a dream. He gave dreams to Nebuchadnezzar, and revealed the secret unto Daniel in a night vision. He promises through Joel that he will pour his spirit upon all flesh, "and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (chap. ii., 28).

The peculiarity of the Christian religion is that it is founded on a dream. The only evidence that God was incarnate in the world and born of a virgin consists of a dream. "Now, the birth of Jesus was on this wise: When as his mother, Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David [very questionable this, by the way], fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Here was an extraordinary dream whereon to found the belief of God having a mother! Had we such a dream ourselves we fancy we should hardly deem it conclusive, but we haven't that; we haven't even Joseph's account of having dreamt it. All we have is the statement of a document said to be "according to Matthew," who is not even related to have ever had Joseph's confidence in the matter. The whole faith of Christendom in this matter rests on the unauthenticated report of a DREAM. No wonder the faith itself has thrown Europe into a dream for more than a thousand years. The people, however, are waking to the absurdity of founding their faith on dreams, and when the modern pilgrim completes his journey from supernaturalism to free-

thought, he rubs his eyes, and says with old John Bunyan,  
"I awoke, and behold it was a dream!"

J. M. WHEELER.

## DEFICIENT IN FAITH.

A LEGEND.

SAID a missionary bishop to a savage o'er the sea,  
"Oh! you wretched wicked sinner, come and listen unto me;  
Pay attention while the story of Redemption I relate.  
Be a Christian, and avert the pagan unbeliever's fate.

I'll endeavor to explain to you, as simply as I can,  
All the sufferings and martyrdom of Christ the Son of Man;  
And I'll show you all the benefits you'll reap another day,  
If you leave your silly idols and will knuckle down and pray.

You must know that we are wicked to an infinite degree,  
And are doomed in fire infernal everlastingly to be;  
And the only chance of dodging it (you see my speech is plain)  
Is to be regenerated, or we'll call it 'born again.'

For if every blessed virtue in your single self were crammed,  
Not an atom would they mitigate the tortures of the damned.  
*Per contra*—you can bigamize, adulterate, or thieve;  
Can burgle, forge, or arsonate, as long as you believe.

But in order this desirable condition to attain,  
You must part with your idols you will never look again.  
You must part with Mumbo Jumbo and his hanky-panky  
tricks,  
Or the Lord'll down upon you like a heavy load of bricks.

You must also be received within our holy Church's pale,  
And submit your sinful carcase e'er the spirit you inhale;  
But when you've had the Sacraments your path to glory's  
paved;  
You're a sanctified believer, and you're numbered with the  
saved.

But beware of those misguided men whose feet have gone  
astray,

Whom the the Lord hath given over to the enemy a prey:  
For their teachings are erroneous, their morals very loose—  
Pernicious; they'll endeavor your allegiance to seduce.

There are Catholics and Methodists, and Baptists, too, as well;  
With Quakers and with Shakers steering straight away to hell.  
There's Ranters and Salvationists, and Mormonites so hot,  
With several hundred others! but avoid the blessed lot."

Now this missionary bishop spent a goodish deal of time—  
I couldn't tell you half he did or put it into rhyme;  
But he labored very earnestly to soothe the savage breast  
That was grieving o'er the loss of Mumbo Jumbo and the rest.

And in course of time the bishop taught the savage man to  
read,  
And he plumed himself on having made a convert to his creed;  
Till the nigger stood before him with his Bible in his hand,  
And in most respectful language couched the following de-  
mand:

"Am I to understand that what is here is strictly true?  
Because there's lots of things herein that puzzles me "a  
few"—

So perhaps your grace will deign to condescendingly explain,  
And elucidate the paragraphs that mystify my brain.

If I read the Bible rightly, why the Holy Scripture saith  
We can only get salvation when we have a need of faith—  
And a little grain that's even microscopical will do;  
But without it we are damned." Remark'd the bishop, "Very  
true."

"Well, *I'm* damned," replies the nigger; "for I've tried a  
simple test—

I ordered yonder hill to shift a lectle farther west.  
I roared at it for half a day, but still it didn't budge.  
I've not the faith, or else the Book contains a deal of fudge.

I haven't caught a serpent yet, to try its deadly tooth,  
And I haven't any poison yet with which to try the truth;  
But the very first, the earliest of chances I'll embrace,  
And I'll bring it on, whiche'er it be, to try it on your grace."

Now a week clapsed, when came before the bishop once again  
This candidate for glory with a serpent in his train;  
But the invite to be bitten was respectfully declined:  
For the bishop fairly turned and fled—the savages behind.

And, fleet of foot, they captured him; compelled him to  
retrace

His most unwilling steps, until they brought him face to face  
With a snake (the genus rattle), which they goaded till its  
spite

On his grace's tender corpus left a very nasty bite.

Suffice it, that he also was deficient just as much  
In his faith as was the savage—so it proved the final touch;  
He kicked the bucket tranquilly. His memory they recall  
Whene'er they see his scalp that hangs in Mumbo Jumbo's  
hall.

D. EVANS.

## ACID DROPS.

THE festival in honor of the re-birth of our Lord and  
Savior the sun having been duly celebrated with its accustomed  
rites of drinking, gormandising and prayer, we can swallow a  
black draught or so and look up the prospects of the forth-  
coming year.

OUR benevolent enemies, the Christians, are agreed that  
1883 will certainly see our incarceration in goal. We should  
advise them to eschew prophecy and remember what a mess  
even Jesus made of it when he took to vaticination. We cer-  
tainly can hold out no prospect to them that 1883 will witness  
any cessation of the *Freethinker* or any change in its policy.

THE *War Cry* reports the opposition of a wax-work show at  
Otley which was overcome "with the help of God and the big  
drum." If such articles are at hand we know none better for  
silencing opposition than God and a big drum—especially the  
drum.

THE religious press say that good observations of the transit  
of Venus were obtained because specially prayed for. There  
is nothing like prayer for clearing clouds from the sky. If  
any reader is foolish and wicked enough to doubt, all we can  
say is, let him try it. The operation to be successfully per-  
formed requires the knees to be well bent and the eyes deci-  
dedly elevated. We mention these particulars as, owing to  
their omission, the experiment is sometimes apt to be disap-  
pointing. During a recent fog we saw a horse down on its  
fore-knees and with its eyes turned up with the true expres-  
sion, but prayer is not so efficacious in regard to fogs—at  
least, not when offered up by horses.

PERHAPS the occasional failure of prayer may be owing to  
not following the direction of the apostolic chief of sinners  
to "pray without ceasing." If Christians would only do this  
we feel confident that something would come of it. We have,  
however, never met a genuine believer. When we find one  
we do not doubt he will be quite able to remove Ludgate Hill  
to Highgate, drink deadly poison, and do other wonderful  
works by the power of prayer. Does not the precious book  
declare that "the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous  
availeth much"? But, alas, it also states why we have no  
effectual prayer: "There is none righteous, no not one."

NONE the less, the Evangelical Alliance, while not coming  
quite up to the Apostolic standard, are determined to have a  
week of it, and next week a chorus will ascend to the  
heavenly ear-trumpet which will surely bring the millennium  
nearer by a week at any rate.

It is a wonder the Christian priests, who copied so much  
from Buddhism, did not copy their praying-machine,  
"rotatory calabash," as Carlyle calls it. It is true that with  
the rosary and "telling beads," the Catholics make a good  
imitation. But the idea of prayer, like other scientific  
principles, is capable of much elaboration and improvement.  
A phonograph constructed to offer up supplications by the  
application of steam, might enable us to obey the injunction  
to "pray without ceasing," and at the same time permit us to  
dispense with parsons paid for the purpose of praying. The  
whole Liturgy might be ground out every morning while we  
were taking breakfast, and like the sailor we could endorse  
the machine made prayers by the simple words, "them's my  
sentiments."

ANOTHER idea strikes us; wind power might be used (we  
don't mean parson's gas). Ventilating chimney tops might be  
constructed to offer up various prayers just according to  
which way the wind blows. Or a praying machine might be  
constructed which should at one and the same time ask the  
Lord for good weather, grind the coffee, clean the knives,  
churn the butter, rock the baby to sleep, and bless his Holy  
Name. Such an article would be invaluable in any Christian  
family. We expect some acknowledgment from the Society  
for Promoting Christian Knowledge for the suggestion.

It is rumored that Mr. Samuel Morley, M.P., is concentrat-  
ing his extraordinary intellect upon the promotion of a society  
for encouraging the South Sea Islanders to purchase prayer  
books and Nottingham laces.

THE *Sydney Bulletin* says: "The Yanjeburra tribe of abori-  
gines inhabiting the district between Aramac and Blackall  
(Q.) are a rum lot. They have a sort of stump-fence religion

of their own, with a god called Woonoogatee, and a devil known as Dthooring. The latter gentleman has a habit of laying for people at night. When he catches them, he takes them to the nearest cemetery and buries them alive. Both the god and the devil have to be propitiated by gifts. There must have been missionaries among these people at one time.

*Truth* draws attention to the fact that Reuben May is still fishing for subscriptions to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, among whom he always reckons his noble self. This arch-impostor is a living proof of how long rascality can flourish under the mask of religion.

It is rumored that the Queen was very strongly opposed to the admission of Lord Derby and Sir Charles Dilke to the Cabinet. Her Majesty, who is very fond of cash, has not forgotten the member for Chelsea's old speeches on the Civil List, and she keenly remembers how Lord Derby's secession from her Benjamin's ministry helped to foil his imperial projects in the East.

With the spread of Blue Ribbonism the old controversy respecting the nature of Sacramental wine crops up. This ought to be settled by 1 Cor. xi, 21, which plainly tells us that some of the early Christians got drunk upon the Lord's Supper. Teetotalers, however, are insisting upon having a temperance sacrament, and in some instances have succeeded in getting ginger cordial or some equally tame and unfermented beverage to represent the blood of the lamb. It is well known that ministers of the Gospel never imbibe anything stronger than the Holy Sacrament, yet it is astonishing how rubicund the clerical proboscis will become when nourished upon their blessed redeemer.

BEECHER, says the *Christian World*, has been mistaken in thinking that the business of religion is to insure against fire in the world to come. Well, it isn't life insurance, nor insurance against hail or thunderstorms, or accidents, and certainly it gives no guarantee for character. May be it is in the nature of a lightning rod, and Beecher, Moody, Talmage and Co., are the lightning rod peddlers. Any way we have a notion that the business of religion is to support its professors.

A CHRISTIAN contemporary cites the longevity of Bishop Ollivant and Dean Close, who recently soared away at the mellow ages of 85 and 86, as proof that the days of the righteous shall be long in the land. But how about the heavy mortality of innocent babies. Clergymen are longer lived than doctors for the same reason that these are longer lived than cabmen. They have less to endure. Securely fed, housed, and with no such demands on the time or intellect as any practising lawyer or physician, most of them have little to wear them out beyond preparing a weekly sermon and begetting heirs for immortality. The clerical profession is at once the most prolific and long-lived of the professions just because it is the laziest.

THE refusal of the Bishop of Manchester to install the Rev. Mr. Cowgill into the Miles Platting living is likely to lead to litigation. The Romanising party in the Church fancy they are now strong enough even to defy the bishops. If, as they hope, the new Primate is more favorable to them than Dr. Tait, there is no doubt they will show a more resolute Rome-ward attitude.

"MOTHS," a comedy from one of Ouida's novels, has recently been played in Huddersfield. One of our readers had his attention drawn to the posters in the town by a lady who asked him whether he had seen the piece. "No," he replied, "I have not. Have you?" "No," said she, "I haven't; but I've heard a good deal of talk about it; I understand it's an adaptation of a very immoral work by Mr. Bradlaugh." There are some people who fancy that "Bradlaugh" is at the bottom of everything naughty.

"EDRUDO," continues his lucubrations on infidelity in the *Peterboro' Express*. We suppose he means something, but we can't exactly tell what. He is harder than the book of Revelation. We have puzzled through that, but "Edrudo" knocks us out of time altogether. He would make a fortune by editing a weather almanack: it would be so easy to make whatever he wrote mean anything.

BISHOP WILBERFORCE'S "Diary" contains some of the most spiteful things ever written. "Soapy Sam" has thrown vitriol posthumously over his acquaintances to make up for humbleness while in the flesh. How he must have gloated and chuckled over the thought of the mischief his reminiscences would work. He tells some capital stories, however. There is a very good one about the late Pope, who was said to be going to issue a decree making himself a fourth person to the Trinity! Talk about blasphemy! Here is a good sample in a book by a Bishop.

By the way, the Christians don't want a fourth person to

the Trinity. They've already got one in God the Devil, who seems the chief boss of this part of the universe.

THE *Spectator* is said to be written by curates for curates, and one of these epicene gentry must surely have written its last week's article on "Miss Leigh's work in Paris." The very pious scribe actually believes that under the Atheistic régime in Paris, people are afraid to go out after dark for fear of being murdered, and that if you ask the way in broad daylight the people stare at you insolently without answering. Somebody has been practising on the poor curate's credulity, we suppose, or else he asked the way in such diabolical French that the people took him to be a lunatic at large.

THE poor curate says that in Paris one believes in nothing; not in man, because not in God. What stupid rubbish this is after the funeral of Louis Blanc. The Parisians are such worshippers of great men that they will cease work by the hundred thousand to pay them a last tribute of respect. Londoners crowd to see a Lord Mayor's show, a royal procession, or a military review, but they would hardly stir out of doors if fifty men of genius were buried at once. Yet they believe in God very considerably here, and prosecute anybody who says a word against him. On the whole, we prefer the Godless but manful style of Paris.

In a review of Mr. Howell's "A Modern Instance," the same *Spectator* remarks that "society in Boston is Unitarian, just as in New York the fashionable religion is an Americanised Church of England, and it is very curious that it seems to be necessary for social success to belong to the fashionable religion." Very true, but why curious? Don't we see the same thing at home? Take away all calculation of profit and loss, and how much religion is there left in this Christian England, whose professional scribes from the most criminal capital in Europe, presume to slander their more honest, sober, and industrious neighbors?

THE burgesses of Hull have again exhibited their pig-headed stupidity in refusing to establish a public library in the town. We wish them a happy New Year, and more sense.

#### N O W.

No wings for me, no bright halo,  
My head to circle round;  
No garments white as spotless snow,  
No angel's trumpet sound.  
No "kingdom come," no spirit life  
Up in the skies above,  
I love this world, it's cares and strife,  
I'll stay here with my love.

Life's sweet to me—to me and Kit,  
And other little things,  
No wings for me—they might not fit!  
I do not want those wings.  
I do not want that golden crown,  
I do not want to see  
An angel Peace, or angel Joyce,  
Sit down with Kit and me.

EDGAR T. BENTON.

#### A NEW PLAY.

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Boston Transcript*, who went to see the miracle play of "Mary Magdalen" at Rome, says it is the most extraordinary thing of the kind he ever witnessed. The jealousy of a young Hebrew—Mary Magdalen's lover—is vivently excited against "this new Prophet, this young, obscure Galilean," whose sect Mary seems inclined to join, and he roundly taxes her with being the mistress of the teacher aforesaid. Jesus throughout the whole play is regarded as the secret lover of Mary. Words familiar to us in the pages of Holy Writ are freely bandied about on the stage, as one character after another mentions, "He said this to me," or "I heard him say to such a one." Pontius Pilate's speeches—the gist of which is that all creeds or beliefs are one as good as the other; that life is short, and the best thing is to enjoy one's self—were warmly applauded. The utterances of Judas in a soliloquy, where he sneers at his high-flown teacher, "My kingdom is not of this world, forsooth! Ah! he lives in the clouds, but I, I live on earth, and wish to make myself comfortable here," were greeted with applause and laughter. The heroine, stung to desperation by hearing that her Master is to die, casts about for every means of influencing his judges and custodians, and at last, snatching up some showy raiment and a necklace of jewels which has been left in her charge for the poor—after her conversion—convulsively decks herself in it and rushes off declaring that she will do anything—will even return to her old life—to save him.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures three times to-day (Sunday, Dec. 31st), in the Hall of Science, Rockingham Street, Sheffield: Morning, at 11, "Poverty, Priestcraft and Privilege;" Afternoon, at 3, "Bible Blunders;" Evening, at 7, "God and His Friends."

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

January 16th, Walworth; 7th, Claremont Hall, London; 14th, Manchester; 21st, Hall of Science, London; 28th, Claremont Hall, London.

February 4th, Leeds; 11th, York; 18th, Plymouth.

March 18th and 25th, Hall of Science, London.

## CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Publisher, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.C.

LITERARY communications to the Editor, Mr. G. W. FOOTE, No. 9 South Crescent, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—J. P. S.

B. WRIGHT.—Too funny by half for us. Try the *War Cry*.

J. JENNINGS.—Yes our defence will be very costly, but at all costs the bigots must be taught that it is no trifle they undertake when they prosecute Freethinkers.

R. JONES.—Geo. Odger died March 4, 1877.

RINALDINO.—Doggerel and bad grammar do not constitute poetry.

E. C. EDWARDS.—Thanks for the Blasphemy Petitions. We have sent you six more as requested.

H. J. BARRETT.—There is no authentic history of any preaching of Christianity in England before the mission of Augustin from Rome in the year 596. We have just published a second edition of our Christmas Number.

W. K.—You will see we have used it.

W. C.—We cannot undertake to send private answers to questions that can be answered in this column. You ask us the meaning of nine different words, every one of which you may find in any good modern dictionary. Why not refer for yourself in so simple a matter? One of the best books on Atheism is Mirabaud's "System of Nature." Read also Mill's "Essays on Religion," and Grote's "Analysis." The last work is published by Mr. Truelove. When you have read these, we shall be happy to direct you to works on any special points.

J. STORE.—Auguste Comte was the founder of Positivism, which, like Buddhism, is a religion without a God. His disciples are numerous in France, and in England they include such men as Dr. Congreve, Dr. Brydges, Mr. Frederic Harrison, and Professor Beesley.

INQUIRER.—Considering that pretty nearly all God's friends in the Bible were thorough-going polygamists, and had as many wives as they could keep and a few more, it is rather rich for Christians to pretend that their religion established monogamy. Ask your friend for proofs.

S. HATTEN sends compliments, and considers our Christmas Number the best threeponnyworth he ever had.

NORTHAMPTONIAN.—Professor F. W. Newman is a Theist. He does not believe that Jesus was a perfect man, much less a god. His "Phases of Faith" was published at half-a-crown, but we cannot say whether it is now in print. Professor Newman's elder brother is the great Cardinal Newman. Shelley's "Queen Mab" contains his strongest avowals of Atheism, but it was a juvenile work. Essentially the same ideas however, are presented in his mature masterpiece, the "Prometheus Unbound." Trelawney says that Shelley was an Atheist to the last, and he knew the poet very intimately. He very justly denounces the hypocrisy of recent critics, who have tried to give Shelley a thick coating of religious respectability.

ALL subscriptions to the "Defence Fund" wait for acknowledgment until next week owing to press of matter.

Our Woodcut is too late for going to press, owing to the Christmas holidays. We shall give a specially good one next week.

## TYLER'S PROSECUTION.

I AM never fond of troubling the readers of the *Freethinker* with unnecessary information about myself, but I deem it advisable to say a few words now that the preliminary legal skirmishing is over and the pitched battle of the trial is close at hand.

Acting under Mr. Bradlaugh's advice, Mr. Ramsey's counsel moved to quash the indictment after the judges had listened to nearly everything that could be said in favor of such a motion; and the result was that the Court sat upon him. I had a personal right to move the Court, but having thoroughly studied the case as far as I could so as to be in readiness to support Mr. Bradlaugh's original application, I could see no substantial point to be urged at that stage of the proceedings; and as my view was corroborated by an

eminent legist whom I consulted, I thought it imprudent to irritate the judges by needlessly occupying their time. All our legal points will be raised and argued at the trial before the case goes to the jury, and I intend to take my share in the discussion then.

Mr. Ramsey will be defended by counsel. This, with Mr. Bradlaugh in the case, will give us two lawyers. I shall plead for myself; partly to avoid ruinous law expenses, which no Defence Fund could well bear; and partly to reserve my right of addressing the jury personally.

Up to the present we have succeeded in quashing, not the indictment, of which I was never hopeful, but the last two counts. The result of this to Mr. Ramsey and myself is simply that we have fourteen counts to answer instead of sixteen. The result to Mr. Bradlaugh, I believe and trust, is that he stands a much better chance of being acquitted.

I am not prone to meet trouble half way, nor am I prone to optimistic delusions. From the outset I have been prepared for the worst, and therefore a harsh sentence will give me no surprise. My chief anxiety has always been about the paper. Imprisonment of individuals is a terrible thing, but it is after all not so bad as the suppression of a Free-thought journal. That must be resisted at all hazards. And I am happy to say it will be resisted. Mr. Ramsey and I both feel easy in that respect. We have taken every precaution as to printing and editing. Contributors will not be lacking while we are in gaol (if we go there), and they are safe enough in any case. The editorial management will devolve, at his own brave request, on the old friend who has cooperated in all my literary enterprises, and who has largely helped to make the *Freethinker* what it is.

I hope we shall win at the trial, but if we lose we shall not be beaten, for our work will go on, and that is the chief thing. While there are brave hearts beside us ready to confront danger at the call of duty, our ultimate victory is assured. You cannot terrorise men who know no fear, and in the name of Free-thought we defy Sir Henry Tyler and all his despicable crew.

G. W. FOOTE.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THE first number of *Progress* is on sale, and it promises to be a great success. It is well got up, and its appearance reflects credit on the printer and publisher. As for the contents, our readers cannot do better than taste for themselves. We have no fear of their verdict after trial.

I WAS very much pleased to see so good an audience at Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, last Sunday evening, despite the fog and the seasonal festivities. The young Branch of the N. S. S. at work there deserves all possible encouragement, and I trust that all readers of the *Freethinker* in that district will lend a helping hand. Milton Hall is a fine commodious building, and affords a good basis for Free-thought activity. The Christians have, as usual tried every trick to oust the Branch from its new quarters, but happily without success.—G. W. F.

IN many respects our colonies are more advanced than the mother country. Marriage with a deceased wife's sister has been sanctioned by the law in Canada, and we just read that the Council of Sydney, Australia, has, by a large majority, thrown open its Art Gallery on Sunday. The museum and public library have been open for some time on the day of rest, and with the most gratifying results. When shall we follow this good example?

THE *New York Independent* points out that exactly the same authority, that of tradition, the Fathers, and the New Testament, was alleged for the Davidic authorship of the Psalms as for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. It is now conceded even by the most conservative that David cannot be the author of Psalms, which describe the Babylonian captivity. Yet the Church finds no difficulty in believing that Moses described his own death and referred to the time when there were kings in Israel.

WE have received from Atchinson, Kansas, U. S., a number of Free-thought Tracts, under the title of the "Image Breaker," by J. E. Remsburg, to which we shall draw our readers' further attention shortly.

ONE of the most active workers in our cause, Mr. J. Brumage, of Portsmouth, has had printed a large number of copies of a poem, by S. P. Putnam, on "Ingersoll and Jesus," which he is distributing very widely, selling to those who can

buy, and giving to those who can't. We wish the friends of Freethought everywhere would interest themselves in circulating such things. Very often what a man takes in through one ear he lets out through the other, but when he gets a thing well in through his eyes, it hasn't the same tendency to go out through the back of his head.

### "THE WRIGGLING CHRISTIAN."

HOWEVER peculiar the title of this article may appear to our readers, we can assure them that it is not half so peculiar as the subject treated of, and its use is fully justified in the fact that "wriggling" is about the only adjective which approaches to a characterisation of some of the peculiarities we are about to take into consideration.

We will at the outset begin by paying Christians generally the compliment of saying that the Christian mind is the most peculiarly ingenious of any conceivable mind. It appears to be its natural birthright and especial privilege that it should be so: and it is so. No other mind can possibly compete with it in eluding the inevitable, or "hold a candle" to it in defeating the unassailable. It stands alone and pre-eminent in this particular respect, an object of wonder and a "caution" to all other minds. It is continually showing us what it can do in this line, and perpetually surpassing its previous "bests on record." If ever it proved that two and two make five, or that two straight lines can enclose a space, or the existence of a square circle be demonstrated mathematically or otherwise (especially otherwise), we may rest assured that the Christian mind will bear all the honors of the discovery as its vast and extensive experiences, in a similar line of business, especially fits it for the job, and, as Christ puts it, "To them that have faith all things are possible."

So far as I have been able to judge, the principal Christian virtues are—first, an immense swallowing capacity combined with extraordinary powers of digestion and assimilation; secondly, unblushing impudence; and thirdly, a never-to-be-done-out-of-my-living sort of tenacity of life, unparalleled in the history of animated nature and the struggle for existence. These virtues combined make up the "Wriggling" Christian. We Freethinkers are well acquainted with him. We know him of old. We have met him on our platforms sometimes, and on his own. In ordinary every-day business affairs he is, as the saying goes, "about as good as they make them" nowadays, though the great wonder is that, considering the amount of practice he has in the art of deception and dissimulation in religious matters, his character for veracity has not wholly gone. It's not his creed's fault anyway if it hasn't. Perhaps self-interest—a very human virtue, by the way—or the law courts have a tendency to keep him within the limits of rectitude. Only fancy John Smith "accepting" to pay a bill in six months, say, and then at the expiration of that time, when the amount is demanded, saying he meant six ages, or six periods, or six geological epochs! That sort of thing has to be confined to Biblical matters where the risk isn't quite so great, or, at any rate, not capable of being so effectually challenged.

The history of the wriggling Christian would be the history of the accommodation of doctrines to circumstances, of adaptations of unchangeable truths to varying conditions of existence. If his portrait were painted it would exhibit him in the act of eternally "eating crow." What a record of wriggling, surely! What a long succession of defeats! It is generally affirmed that Englishmen never know when they are beaten. The wriggling Christian *won't* know. It wouldn't pay. He's too cute. His trade and occupation would be gone. Suppose, for instance, that he would honestly and candidly admit that Darwinism is true; that the creation story is a myth; and that the theological doctrines founded on it, such as the fall of man, the atonement, original sin, etc., were knocked into considerably less compass than the familiar cocked hat. It wouldn't do at all. He'd be not only theologically bankrupt, but, what is far more important, commercially bankrupt as well. So what does he do? He sees that two courses only are left open to him, either to remain a fossilised teacher of played-out absurdities, in which case he sees he will soon be left, as it were, stranded high and dry on the shore of a deserted land; or, secondly, to "accommodate" himself and his teachings to scientific thought. So he chooses the latter, and begins to wriggle, and wriggle, and wriggle. He begins to fit in, to dovetail the teachings of science into the teachings of Scripture; he grafts the flourishing boughs of science on the branchless trunk of religion; he juggles with words and phrases, manipulates sentences, and puts unheard-of never-to-be-forgotten construction on others; adopts, what he had previously denounced as the most outrageous heresy, and vows that it contains greater evidence than ever of the marvellous and mysterious nature of the great and beneficent creator; and develops generally such infinite resources of ingenuity and audacity as to fill the astonished, uninitiated looker-on, if not with feelings of disgust and contempt, at any rate with the conviction that the Christian mind or the Hebrew language, or both, are fearfully and wonderfully put together.

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the parsons

are *not* afraid of science, that they are *not* trying to deceive us when they say that all the scientific discoveries of the past tend but to confirm the truth of the Blessed Bible; and let us assume that they are honest when they assure us of their confidence that all the discoveries of science in the future will tend still more to establish and confirm its truth and authority; let us, we repeat, suppose that they themselves really believe this, and what does it prove? Either that they and their kind have always knowingly tried to smother the truth or else were too ignorant to see and appreciate it. We know how they treated Gallileo; we know how they treated Darwin. The discoveries of the former they long ago adopted; the discoveries of the latter they are rapidly "assimilating." Now if they tried to smother the truth, the mere mention of the fact is sufficient to damn their reputation in this world as effectually as the cursing proclivities of Jesus would damn us Freethinkers hereafter; if they were too ignorant to see and appreciate it, we can weigh their qualifications to pronounce on scientific topics to a nicety, and willingly dispense with their services in the future. It is no use the wrigglers of the present day saying that they are not responsible for the persecutions of the past, that they are not to be blamed for the ignorance of their predecessors, and that *they* admit to be true what their co-religionists denounced as false many years ago. What their predecessors did to Gallileo in the 17th century, they themselves did in like spirit to Darwin in the 19th. Of course they didn't imprison him, but that was *not* their fault. They'd only have been too glad to do it. Now they are beginning to admit they were wrong!

One very funny and suspicious circumstance connected with the subject deserves attention. The "wrigglers" never discover the "harmony" and "additional confirmation," which they say exists between scientific doctrines and their creed, until everybody else has arrived at exactly opposite conclusions. They are obstinately obtuse in regard to the "wonderful harmony" until the "good old book" is within "measurable distance" of being beyond the help even of their infinite galvanising resources. This is to be regretted as it has a tendency to make wicked infidels sceptical as to their faith in the "harmony" and "evidences"; and labor under the impression that if they (the wrigglers) were not forced to say something on the subject they would let it rest as they would a hornet's nest.

MARS.

### SPEAK OUT.

"Freedom's battle, once begun,  
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,  
Though baffled oft is ever won."

*To those of the orthodox who once named me friend.*—It may be true, as you have said in derision, that I am an enthusiast, but in this one thing be charitable,—when I declaimed from your pulpits you named my ardor "earnestness." I was a Christian then if ever man was Christian; I am an Atheist now for life and for death.

When I spoke heresy from the pulpit, you discussed it in "Church Committee" and barred my presence there. In the lifetime of your friend and mine, the Rev. Joseph Nettleton, I never questioned why; now that you have slandered me I tell you from this free platform you *dared not* hear me then. When my business flourished in my own home town you were kind enough to visit me with your advice: "Hold your own opinions," one of you said, "but do not give them publicity;" then, when I curbed my tongue and pen, you whispered I had "changed." When I posted *National Reformer* placards in my shop windows to rebut this, you knew the end of business life for me was coming, but you knew it not so well as I. You knew not when you chalked "Infidel" on my shop shutters in the night how the morning brought me joy to see it there.

You laughed one morning at the foolish hand that had scrawled on the panel of the door this legend—

"THOU GOD SEEST ME."

But who of you laughed when, later in the day, you saw it still there, and appended the line in another hand

"THEN MIND WHAT YOU ARE AFTER."

You looked for the closing of my premises, when to a large outdoor audience I pleaded for Northampton and its choice. It might have ended there, but that your preachers in the security of their "holy places" would not let me rest. So in the open field and in the hall—my friends and I fought for and secured—I told you of my Atheism and you bit your lips in anger.

What were the unpleasant names three pious "friends" hurled at me, when in December, 1880, your roughs threw dangerous missiles for arguments?

When my shutters were closed, and the broker's men took

away my goods, you said you knew how it would be. Why should it be so? Was my Atheism dishonest? Was I less worthy as an Atheist than as a Christian? You knew how it would be, but you knew not the fire your persecution had lit. From that day I said "I *will* speak out!"

Though friends and relations desert me and my path be strewn with obstructions,

#### I WILL SPEAK OUT.

To those new friends who have replaced the old.—There is work to be done for progress, and I want to share the struggle. I want, if I can, to influence young men joining the ranks of Freethought. There is more freedom in matters of opinion to-day than there was in the struggling early days of some of our elder leaders. Friends you may lose, but others are at hand as good and true and firm; difficulties you may meet and advantages may be lost to you, but difficulty is a grand schoolmaster, and step by step you will conquer and learn and strengthen if you only dare to Speak Out.

Take those two words for your motto, but work with some discretion. Never be first in conversation to push your cause unseemingly, but to he who asks you seriously of your opinions, Speak Out.

Men you will meet with who, out of idle curiosity, jestingly, will talk of things that touch your heart—will question you to please some idle whim or to amuse a stander-by. Never reply. Let it be a serious matter with you; something not to jest on but to take pride in; something to reason about coolly, with cheerfulness. When a man asks you, in all seriousness, for information's sake, with a desire to investigate and learn what are your opinions? Say to such a man, unhesitatingly, "I am an Athoist." Say it with a smile, as though it did you good. Never be ashamed or afraid of the term; it is losing the sound of reproach and will lose it quicker for the ready admission; nay! it is coming into dignity. You cannot think with what pride I say it sometimes though once I would have shuddered at the name. Never be tempted to speak of gods and ghosts as serious things. Be true to yourself. Be consistent. Be ready to retort. Be guarded. Be calm. Be courteous, but always when the opportunity for *real* effect presents itself—

#### SPEAK OUT.

JOHN ROWELL WALKER.

## FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

JESUS AND THE JEWS.—If I were an inhabitant of New York, and were told that a person possessing the power of working miracles had appeared in London, and that he had repeatedly raised the dead to life, and that notwithstanding the Londoners put him to death because he told them their faults, I should be strongly inclined to believe that either he worked no miracles, or that they did not kill him. No set of men ever lived who would venture to destroy a person knowing him to be gifted with so remarkable and tremendous a power.—*Alex. Calder*, "The Man of the Future," p. 116; 1872.

CHRISTIAN CURIOSITIES.—We know very well that the Christians are by no means destitute of genuinely oriental fictions, in which asses speak, pigs perform feats, and birds descend from heaven with messages.—"Religion in the Light of Philosophy," p. 44; Williams and Norgate, 1882.

CLERICAL CELIBACY.—Of all the diabolical dodges for preventing the parsons from seeing who they are, or what human beings are, or what their work in the world is, the most complete above everything else is the celibacy of the clergy.—*Rev. Chas. Kingsley*, "Two Years Ago."

PROFESSOR AGASSIZ AND SCIENTIFIC AGNOSTICISM.—Even the late Professor Agassiz, who, in default of better, publicly attacked Darwin with the *ad captandum* argument, "We are not the children of monkeys; we are the children of God," said to me privately in just so many words, "Mr. Chadwick, the scientific man, knows nothing about God."—*J. W. Chadwick*, "The Faith of Reason," p. 16; Boston, 1879.

## PROFANE JOKES.

"Hold the forte, for I am coming," as the muscular man said when his pals were staggering with the piano on the stairs.

It is rumored that His Satanic Majesty has increased his orders for fuel by 10,000 tons yearly since Colonel Ingersoll has taken up lecturing.

It is stated that Talmage on account of the largeness of his mouth takes as his favorite hymn "Not more than others I deserve though God has given me more."

A WRETCH.—A brute of a bachelor, on being informed that "marriages are made in heaven," said he wished that a prohibitive duty had prevented their export from the place of their manufacture.

A LITTLE fellow lately asked his parents to take him to church with them. They said he must wait until he was older. "Well," was his shrewd suggestion in response, "you'd better take me now, for when I get bigger I may not want to go."

SCENE:—Ghost of departed husband visiting his wife.—*Wife*: Is that you Thomas? *Ghost*: Yes my dear. *Wife*: How do you get on in your new quarters? *Ghost*: Much better than I did my 20 years of married life with you. *Wife* (delighted): Then of course you are in heaven? *Ghost*: Oh dear no, certainly not.

IN a village in the West of England a Baptist chapel being under repair, the congregation were obliged to hold their service in a barn, which was greatly infested by rats. One running across the floor just as the minister was commencing his sermon, caused him to give out the following novel text: "And the Lord spake unto Noah and said—there's a great rat!"

"OLD ABE" recently subscribed for a bell for a new church in his neighborhood, and was shortly afterwards waited upon by the curate, who requested another subscription towards an organ. "Old Abe" declined. "But," urged the suppliant, "you subscribed to the bell." "Aye, lad," replied Abe, "that's right enough. It was pleasant to lie in bed on a Sunday morning; it sounded as if they were clearing the course. But I should never be able to hear the organ there." The curate reached for his hat.

MEMBERS of the cloth are not always above severely criticising each other's feelings. It is related of that most eloquent of English clergymen, Robert Hall, that he once—disgusted by the egotism and conceit of a preacher who, with a mixture of self-complacency and impudence, challenged his admiration of a sermon—was provoked to say: "Yes, there was one very fine passage of your discourse, sir." "I am rejoiced to hear you say so; which was it?" "Why, sir, it was the passage from the pulpit to the vestry."

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OF

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